

Proposed Land Use & Subdivision Ordinance Changes to be voted on at the Annual Town Meeting on March 10, 2007

Below are highlights of the proposed changes to regulations for land use submitted by the Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee. The detailed plan is published on the Town website:

www.harpswell.maine.gov. Copies are available and maps are on display at the Town Office.

- The goal of the Comprehensive Plan is to guide Harpswell's inevitable growth while maintaining its community character and quality of life.
- The implementation plan identifies possible village and rural districts. It recommends lower densities in rural areas and higher densities in village growth areas.

Village Districts:

The purpose of the proposals for Village Districts is to enhance village development, minimize suburbanization and sprawl, and encourage new growth in the districts by promoting cost effective public/private infrastructure development costs.

- The four village districts designated for growth are adjacent to, but not in, areas that are already densely developed.
 - Harpswell Center
 - South and West Harpswell neighborhoods along Route 123
 - East Harpswell-by-the-Sea neighborhood
 - Cundy's Harbor
- There are no changes proposed for Settled Villages – Bailey Island, Southern Orr's Island – and the Shoreland zones.
- For individual building lots, there is no change proposed in the minimum lot size of approximately one dwelling per acre. The initial proposal to allow minimum lot sizes of approximately one-half acre was removed, based on public comment and the potential difficulties in siting wells and septic systems.
- For subdivisions (three or more lots), cluster development would be required. The subdivision regulations would allow smaller lot sizes (approximately one-half acre) but require a percentage of common open space based on the size of the original parcel. The proposal allows (but does not require) placing wells and septic systems in the common space for increased flexibility.
- The proposal works out to an overall density for the subdivision of approximately one unit per acre. Through the Planning Board review process, which is required for all subdivisions, the developer would need to demonstrate that water quality and quantity meet the standards as set forth in the Town's ordinances.
- The minimum lots size for an attached two-family dwelling unit would be approximately one acre (40,000 sq. ft.)

Rural Districts:

The purpose of the proposals for rural districts is to conserve their natural features and accommodate growth consistent with the character of the district. District features include a natural landscape of forest, field and water along with wetlands, flood plains, steep hillsides, and critical habitat areas.

- The proposed rural districts are on either side of Harpswell Center, between the two village growth districts on Great Island, on the north side of Orr's Island, and on many of the off-shore islands.
- Road setbacks for new construction along Routes 24 and 123 and Mountain and Cundy's Harbor Roads would be increased from 40 feet to 75 feet in order to maintain Harpswell's rural character. Wooded buffers of 50 feet, where they exist along the road frontage, would be required to be maintained.
- The proposed requirement for individual building lots would be two acres per dwelling unit, in order to achieve lower density in rural areas. The only exception is for a one-time family lot division in which one acre would continue to be allowed.
- For subdivisions, (three or more lots), cluster development would be required. Common land of at least 60% of the original parcel to be subdivided must be provided. The minimum lot size for any single dwelling unit would be approximately a half acre. The overall project density for a subdivision is approximately two acres per unit.
- Common lands may include active and passive recreational areas, water access, visual buffers, ecologically unique areas and wildlife habitat and corridors. Common land requirements would be based on the total parcel size, not just the buildable area and, reflecting public comment, may include resource protected lands or areas otherwise protected so that the developer is not unfairly burdened.

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Send comments or questions to the Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee in care of Jay Chace, Town Planner: jchace@town.harpswell.me.us